

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why my hon. friend is being so critical of what took place last year because she, further to some meetings we had, stood in front of 24 Sussex and said that the crisis was not one of the federal government's making and that the crisis, by and large, was being handled well. If she has changed her mind on that, fair ball, but that is my recollection of what she had to say.

With regard to how we involve the Canadian people, we involve the Canadian people through the Parliament of Canada. We already have two commissions going and we propose to directly involve—

Mr. Speaker, I am answering a question from the NDP leader which I am trying to treat seriously, but her members will not allow me to answer. The only way to do it, as best I know, is to involve the members directly in parliamentary work that will give rise to solutions to this great problem we are confronting. Otherwise, I would have to conclude that my hon. friend would want me to call an election.

I cannot do that because after the election the NDP members are usually pretty hard on their leader.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. The Leader of the Opposition spoke in favour of a united Canada before the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, but the Prime Minister of Canada did not have the courage to appear and support Canada before the commissioners. Worse still, his representative refrained from voting. So here is my question: How can Canadians feel confident that this Prime Minister will maintain Canadian unity, whereas he prevents his own member from voting in favour of Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is a typically Liberal stunt. We have just heard a statement to the effect that in the wee hours of the morning Mr. Hogue, faced with a proposition supportive of sovereignty, voted against. Today, because of a subsequent vote, they want to suggest, for the reasons I have just explained, that this makes the Progressive Conservative Party or the government an enemy of Canada. Well, Mr. Speaker, my friend who was once a loyal supporter of our latest constitutional initiative will remember what some people described as the degrading spectacle at Calgary when we saw Mr. Wells congratulat-

ing Mr. Chrétien who was heard to say "Clyde, thank you for all your good work".

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, the silence of the member for Outremont over the final report of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission might have very serious consequences. My question to the Prime Minister is very simple: When will you stop playing poker with Canada? Stop playing poker!

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my friend knows that very well, for as parliamentarians we were together in the long struggle in favour of Canadian unity.

Mr. Lapierre: That's over!

Mr. Mulroney: No, it is not over. The hon. member for Shefford—as it happened, at the time he was campaign manager for the member for LaSalle—Émard—was supportive of Canadian unity. To the member for Shefford I say that we may have lost it for a few moments, but we will get it back later on.

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Does the Prime Minister agree that there should be a referendum in Quebec on its sovereignty; in other words, separation from Canada as early as 1992? If he does not agree, then why did he instruct his representative on the committee to abstain and not vote against this proposal? The people of Canada deserve a clear and definite answer.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have given an answer. Perhaps I could ask my friend to check the premise of his own question.

Subsequent to that decision, Mr. Remillard, Quebec's inter-governmental affairs minister, made it clear that a referendum on sovereignty is not cast in stone. At 5:20 this morning I was listening to the CBC, as I do every morning, and he said: "If we receive proposals from the rest of Canada and if we decide to hold a referendum on them, and if Quebecers say yes, that means that we will have to postpone the sovereignty referendum."

The Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs is already acknowledging that there may not be a referendum on sovereignty. The objective of all parliamentarians, including this member, should be to work constructively to make sure that there is not that referendum on